



# City of Rockville's • FISCAL YEAR 2021 • ANNUAL REPORT

• JULY 1, 2020 TO JUNE 30, 2021 •



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER

A year-and-a-half into this COVID-19 pandemic, the residents and City of Rockville are proving that together, we can weather the storm.

Over the past year, your city government adapted and innovated to meet the needs of our community, while continuing to provide the high level of service that you've come to expect.

When health restrictions forced city facilities to close and city events to be cancelled, we still found ways to work and play together.

Here are Rockville's accomplishments throughout Fiscal Year 2021, which ran from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021. This report reflects the ways the city has changed by adapting to the pandemic, and importantly, the ways the city has preserved a commitment to serving you.

Clearly, COVID-19 altered "business as usual" by limiting face-to-face interactions, closing city facilities and service counters for now, pushing public meetings online, and canceling community gatherings. However, it's also presented us an opportunity to innovate. We launched virtual and recreation programs, putting precautions in place to protect participants' health, while expanding outdoor activities. Community members can still meet and engage with city leaders like the Mayor and Council, Planning Commission, and boards and commissions via online programming. We reimaged celebrations like the annual Memorial Day Parade and Rocktoberfest as virtual events – and when it was safe to do so, welcomed neighbors to gather again with the Live at RedGate outdoor concert series.

We worked tirelessly to ensure that neighbors in need were not forgotten, using our community centers and the Rockville Senior Center to distribute food and face coverings, and to host COVID-19 testing. We worked with the county health department to bring COVID-19 vaccination clinics to communities where they were needed. We found ways to offer online access to rent relief resources, mental health services, and mentoring and counseling for students and families. And we kept up our push for public health, with the Rockville Goes Purple Campaign raising awareness about the impacts of opioid addiction, and the Great American Smokeout, encouraging smokers and vapers to drop the habit.

We kept our eyes on the community's call for social justice by surveying the community and city employees about racial and ethnic equity issues in Rockville, by continuing to engage residents in Fair and Impartial Policing training, and by creating a Community Policing Advisory Board. The city's ongoing efforts included observing Juneteenth for the first time, promoting community in-service projects, and hosting a forum on racial equity and social justice.

While these past 18 months have brought difficult challenges, it's also given us fresh hope and confidence that as a community we can survive, and indeed, thrive, as we adapt to our ever-changing world. On the behalf of the Mayor and Council and city staff, we appreciate your support for our community and your sacrifices in the past year, as we continue to fight our way out of this pandemic.

I wish you and your family good health and happiness.

  
Rob DiSpirito, Rockville City Manager



In June, the city held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Rockville Skate Park, with demonstrations by accomplished skateboarders.



From left to right, top: Councilmember David Myles, Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton and Councilmember Mark Pierzchala. Bottom: Councilmembers Beryl L. Feinberg and Monique Ashton.

## Rockville is ... Able to Adapt to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Demand for residential **recycling and trash collection** continued to increase throughout FY 2021. City crews collected **6%** more recycling and trash and received **10%** more requests for special collections of bulk waste, metal and electronics compared to Fiscal Year 2020. Crews collected:



**20,387** tons of material, including  
**4,937** tons of recycling and  
**4,255** tons of yard waste from  
**14,049** customers.

**55,800**



... shoppers to the **Rockville Farmers Market**, which put in place rules and regulations and a preordering program to provide for quicker, safer shopping.

## ... Playing Together (Even While Apart) Through the Pandemic



Parks experienced an unprecedented increase in use, as did open spaces and bike-ways. **RedGate Park** became a favorite new destination, with portable toilets added and increased maintenance to meet need. Physical distancing signs, hands-free soap dispensers and other safety related improvements were made to City facilities.

Virtual programs enabled the community to safely connect from home in a variety of ways including a virtual



Rocktoberfest, Mysteries from the Mansion, a Master Gardener series, ballet and fitness classes, book clubs, virtual International Night, and a virtual Memorial Day ceremony. The **Recreation and Parks Department** innovated to nurture community connections through modified programs such as family-assisted swim lessons, Nature-to-Go and take-home Rec-it Kits, and outdoor events such as the Halloween Sweet Treat Drive Through and Holiday House Decoration Contest.



**3,000** people attended **Live at RedGate** after restrictions were lifted in June for four days of free outdoor concerts, family entertainment and food.

**18,879** participants in **Recreation and Parks programs**, many of which moved online.

## ... Taking Care of Our Community

Community centers and the Rockville Senior Center coordinated with residents and local nonprofits to collect and **distribute food for neighbors in need**. Thousands of face coverings were given away and some community centers were used as COVID-19 testing sites.

**54,516**



... **meals served** by the Rockville Senior Center.

**324**



... **rides to grocery stores** provided by Senior Center shuttle buses.

Continued on page 4 ...



## Efficient and Effective City Service Delivery

### Rockville is ... FAST

The Department of Planning and Development Services and the Department of Public Works modified several sections of the city's zoning ordinance to launch **Rockville's FAST program**. FAST, which stands for "faster, accountable, smarter and transparent," is a city initiative to improve Rockville's development review and permitting services. It created a virtual department to keep developments and services on track with online applications, payments, virtual inspections and virtual meetings.

The Department of Information Technology took steps to **ensure and enhance security** of the city's information technology infrastructure, including reviewing security and network configuration for a variety of city systems and conducting online cyber security user training for city staff.

The Department of Finance unveiled a **new payment system**, at [www.rockvillemd.gov/utility](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/utility) billing, allowing customers to pay utility bills online, by mail, phone or text message; receive bills and receipts via email with a paperless option; and get email and optional text message reminders.

**4.5**  
Rating  
(out of 5)

Rating (out of 5) the Department of Planning and Development Services received in a customer service survey. PDS unveiled a **Customer Bill of Rights** and customer service protocols, processing over 20 second opinions, training new employees on the bill of rights, and recognizing and holding staff accountable for customer service actions.

## Good Governance/ Informed and Engaged Residents

### Rockville is ... Government Engaged With the Community

**4 consecutive years** that Rockville has scored perfect marks on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index for the city's commitment to the health, welfare, safety and equality of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community.



The Mayor and Council established the **Community Policing Advisory Board** in December to enhance community engagement, diversity, inclusion and social justice. The board is working towards better community engagement with the police department, reviewing crime data and statistics, and discovering ways to engage and communicate with residents to create a safe Rockville for all.

**3 Fair and Impartial Policing trainings** were hosted by the Rockville City Police Department with command staff, the Mayor and Council, community members and nonprofit representatives. The training fosters dialogue about the department's priorities and mission of unbiased community policing practices.

The Department of Public Works completed a **wayfinding study** that developed a plan for consistent signage in Rockville Town Center.

Rockville held the city's **inaugural Juneteenth holiday celebration** with a virtual panel discussion



with the Mayor and Council, Rockville Economic Development, Inc., and other community lead-

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ers; community cleanup events; and a Peerless Rockville exhibit about Rockville's Underground Railroad. The holiday became a paid holiday for city employees.

**90 participants** joined a virtual panel discussion on racial and ethnic equity and social justice in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The city, for the first time, launched surveys of the community, and a separate survey for employees, on racial and ethnic equity and social justice.

### Rockville is ... Advocating for the Community

The Mayor and Council:

- Continued to **advocate on behalf of Rockville neighborhoods** and oppose the state project to add toll lanes to interstates 270 and 495 between the American Legion Bridge and Frederick.
- Worked with the county Department of Health and Human Services to bring **COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics to sites within the city**.
- Issued a proclamation** declaring the city's participation in the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 19 and encouraging smokers and vapers to drop the habit and take their first step to becoming healthier.
- Continued to shine a spotlight on the nationwide impact of opioid addiction through the **Rockville Goes Purple campaign**. Purple lights illuminated City Hall, the Rockville City Police Station and other areas of Town Center during National Recovery Month in September as the city held several events, including a drug take-back, training on the use of the life-saving opioid overdose reversal drug Narcan, a virtual Race for Recovery 5K and an online book discussion with journalist Beth Macy of her "New York Times" bestseller "Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors and the Drug Company that Addicted America."



*"My child came home with stories every time and was filled with both enthusiasm for what she had learned and a lot of new knowledge. The program was well organized and ran the entire hour. Thanks!"*

— parent of a participant in  
Croydon Creek Nature Center's  
Outdoor Nature Club

Taking health precautions, 127 campers participated in the city's summer camps during Fiscal Year 2021.



City police, with help from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, collected 200 pounds of unused prescription drugs during two drive-thru take-back collection events.

RCPD continued efforts to **train all sworn staff in best practices** for de-escalation, including Fair and Impartial Policing and crisis intervention training, with emphasis on responding to a mental health crisis, including the use of a soon-to-be hired mental health professional to assist with calls for service.

RCPD received the **Governor's Crime Prevention Award** for comprehensive crime prevention plans.

**9 times** the Rockville City Police Department has been reaccredited after successfully completing the final year of a four-year assessment by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, which conducted a virtual hearing with the CALEA review board and found RCPD to be compliant and successful in all areas of the accreditation process.

The Mayor and Council adopted, and city staff began engaging the community in developing, **Vision Zero**, a strategy to eliminate all traffic and pedestrian fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, fair mobility for all.



*"I am so grateful that [Rockville Swim and Fitness Center] offered these aqua classes during a difficult time. I think the staff did a wonderful job keeping the staff and participants safe. Mata, the instructor, made the class so fun and a hard workout. She is wonderful!"*

— Glenda Ashkin

## Safe and Livable Neighborhoods

### Rockville is ... Creating and Maintaining Safe and Livable Neighborhoods

<b>13.3%</b> overall decrease in reported crime, for the calendar year that ended Dec. 31	<b>6.8%</b> decrease in reported crimes against people, including homicides, assaults and sex offenses
<b>8.8%</b> decrease in reported crimes against property, including burglaries, robberies, thefts and vandalism	<b>42%</b> decrease in reported crimes against society, including drug, prostitution and weapons offenses

**200 pounds**  
of unused, unwanted prescription drugs collected at two drive-thru collections by RCPD.



A crew reinforced the concrete deck of the Scott Drive Bridge, increasing its load-carrying capacity.



The Halloween Sweet Treat Drive Through was one way the Recreation and Parks Department brought safer, outdoor events to the community.



“ We so appreciate all you and the staff are doing so we can swim. You are going above and beyond the call of duty! Thank you, thank you, thank you. ”

— Jennifer Baker

**\$50,000 grant** secured by the Department of Housing and Community Development from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services to provide counseling services to students at Twinbrook Elementary. The city also hired a youth and family counseling specialist for the school and for outreach and referral services to all schools and community settings in Rockville.

The city **constructed pedestrian safety projects**, including new sidewalks, crosswalk and bump outs in Twinbrook, and a pedestrian safety



flashing beacon at the intersection of Great Falls Road and Monument Street.

<b>\$58,293</b> raised by the city's 2020 Holiday Drive, including	<b>\$1,525</b> in gift cards <i>plus</i> <b>\$8,925</b> worth of non- monetary donations, including books and family sponsorships
<b>1,577</b> people in <b>451</b> families received grocery gift cards in November	<b>1,026</b> children received Target gift cards and a book as part of the drive in December

**117**  
people in  
**28**  
families were paired with sponsors  
who purchased gifts for each member  
of the household.



“ Thank you for your attention to this, your Department's thorough assessment and response. Your staff has been courteous, professional, and helpful. ”

— Margo Ray,  
in an email to the city forester

**A new online donation portal** at [www.rockvillemd.gov/donate](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/donate) made it easier to donate to programs assisting low-income residents, such as the Rockville Emergency Assistance Program and the Holiday Drive.

**848 city residents** interacted with the Department of Housing and Community Development as they sought services and assistance, including with rent, energy bills, food insecurity and wellness.

**18 parents** of Maryvale Elementary School Linkages to Learning students attended on-line English for Speakers of Other Languages classes through a Montgomery County Coalition for Adult English Literacy grant secured by the Department of Housing and Community Development in partnership with the Rockville Recreation and Parks Foundation.

**426 virtual mentoring sessions** were provided at three elementary schools. **18 volunteer mentors** received tech training from the city's mentoring program so that they could mentor children online.

**37 students** were connected by the Department of Housing and Community Development with mental health counseling through School and Community Youth Services and Linkages to Learning.

**84 students from 36 families** received case management and social service assistance through the city's Latino Youth Development program for middle and high school Latino male students. The program provided lessons on team building, mentoring and problem solving, as well as academic support, case management and social service assistance, to 39 middle and high school Latino male students and their families.

**6 students** can be served at one time, in person, by the city's new therapeutic recreation program, which helps participants recognize causes of stress and learn coping skills to alleviate stress.

**5 households at 50% of area median income** were placed by the Department of Housing and Community Development in moderately priced dwelling units at Tower Oaks, the city's first MPDU homeownership units below 60% of AMI. The city also put four families in Tower Oaks units that are priced at 60% of AMI.

**30 MPDUs** at Kansa at Twinbrook (formerly Avalon Bay at Twinbrook) were filled by DHCD.

**9 low- to moderate-income senior and disabled homeowners**, and four housing providers collectively serving over 400 individuals, were assisted by DHCD.

**79 landlord-tenant disputes** were mediated, including **8 cases** heard by the Rockville Landlord-Tenant Commission.

**23 low- to moderate-income homeowners** were helped by DHCD to access Maryland Energy Assistance grant funds and **10 homeowners** DHCD helped, through the Home Energy Assistance Program, to use MEA grant funds to make energy-efficiency upgrades to their homes to help lower utility cost.

Rockville is ... **A Great Place for Seniors**

<b>1,464</b> Rockville Senior Center members	<b>712</b> fitness center members, participated in <b>200</b> training sessions
<b>7,034</b> participants in senior center recreation classes, trips, sports, leagues, and events	<b>3,756</b> members of the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center made <b>99,775</b> visits
<b>1,656</b> participants in programs offered by Croydon Creek Nature Center.	

## Planning and Preservation/ Stewardship of Infrastructure

### Rockville is ... A City of Neighborhoods and Well- Planned Communities

**2 public hearings**, and many work sessions, held by the Mayor and Council to review the Planning Commission's Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan update. (See page 1 of this edition of "Rockville Reports" for information about the plan's adoption.)

The Department of Planning and Development Services guided the **East Rockville Design Guidelines** to adoption by the Mayor and Council. The guidelines will ensure that new single-family homes and additions to existing homes will be compatible with the East Rockville community.

**1,200 survey responses** kicked off a master plan study exploring the future use of RedGate Park. The response was the best yet to any planning outreach effort.

### Rockville is ... Maintaining City Infrastructure and Building for the Future

The Department of Public Works completed:

- Sidewalks along Southlawn Lane, North Horners Lane, Fletcher Place and Bradley Avenue, and Vandergrift Avenue near the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center.
- A **traffic signal upgrade** at Wootton Parkway and Hurley Avenue.
- **Replacement of water lines** in the Montrose community, along Muriel and Wilmar streets, Nina Place, and Lorre and Lorraine drives.
- Commercial **water meter upgrades**.
- **Sewer lining, rehabilitation and improvements**.
- Rehabilitation of corrugated metal pipe along Middle Lane and Denham Road, as part of **storm drain rehabilitation and improvements**.
- Cabin John Parkway **gabion wall repair**.
- **Stream restoration spot repairs** at Bullards Park and Woodley Gardens Park.
- **Rehabilitation** of the Scott Drive Bridge.

**650 feet of 60-year-old storm drain** along Middle Lane were made better than new using a new method for rehabilitating large, corrugated metal pipe storm drains. It was the **first time the city has used an ultraviolet light process to renew storm drain**. The cured-in-place pipe lining is installed from above ground over the course of a week, without excavation and with minimal disruption to the community, eliminating the discharge of hazardous chemicals that could otherwise flow into city waterways.

**1,701 regulatory compliance inspections** were conducted by the Environmental Management Division, including:

<b>632</b> at construction sites	<b>68</b> through a new commercial stormwater pollution prevention inspection and education program.	<b>403</b> for backflow inspection reports
<b>470</b> at stormwater facilities		<b>128</b> at food service establishments

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Infrastructure and Building  
continued from page 3 ...

With some buildings closed during the pandemic, the Parks and Facilities Division took the opportunity to complete infrastructure and maintenance projects that improve accessibility and safety, including new roofing at the Pump House, replacing heating and cooling units, and updating restrooms.



**James Monroe Park** was renovated. New bike racks and chess tables, resurfaced playing courts and accessibility improvements were added at locations throughout the city.

Rockville is ... Beautiful and Blooming

**45,000 spring bulbs** and **28,000 summer annuals** were planted by city crews.

A red-tailed hawk sculpture arose from the stump of a cedar tree at **David Scull Park** in fall.

Rockville is ... Green

**\$500 worth of deer fencing** was donated by Home Depot toward a garden plot project at Wootton Mills Park, in which mentors and students in the city's mentoring program planted and cared for vegetables and flowering plants, learning about irrigation, plant growth cycles, horticulture, and nutrition. The project raised visibility for the program with two nurseries offering to donate plants. Gardeners offered help and community members received community service hours.

**399 volunteers** to the Adopt-a-Stream program removed **271 bags** of trash from city waterways.

**4,873 square feet** of conservation landscaping, **28 trees** and **11 rain barrels** were installed using rebates through the RainScapes Rebates program.

**300 native trees** were adopted by over 150 residents through the **Fall Tree Giveaway**, a socially distanced event hosted by the Environmental Management Division in partnership with the Forestry Division, in October at the Rockville Senior Center.



**400 residents** received **seed packets** by mail to celebrate National Pollinator Month in June.

**527 volunteers** contributed over 50 socially distanced workdays as the **Rockville Weed Warrior program** removed non-native invasive plants from city parks.

**525 survey responses** and 225 participants during 11 virtual events, including a virtual open house for over 50 participants in seven breakout groups, provided input on Rockville's first **Climate Action Plan**.



**Energy efficient interior lighting**, paid for with a combination of city funds, Maryland Smart Energy Communities grant funding, and Pepco rebates, was installed at **Lincoln Park Community Center**.

**100%** of the electricity used by city operations was offset by the city's purchase of wind renewable energy.

The Mayor and Council **voted unanimously** to allow Montgomery County's **pesticide law** to apply in the city. The law restricts the use of certain pesticides on private lawns, playgrounds, mulched recreation areas and child care facilities.

Adapting to the COVID-19 Pandemic  
continued from page 1 ...

**1,550 subscribed** to a COVID-19 email newsletter launched in March 2020 by the Public Information and Community Engagement Division and published several times each week to inform community members about the latest COVID-19 news from the city, county, state and federal government, including how to help in the community, and safe and fun activity ideas for families to do at home.



**3 community webinars** provided resources and information about rental assistance programs, including updates on federal housing policies and pandemic relief. The Department of Housing and Community Development led several COVID-19 relief initiatives, including rental stabilization measures and rental assistance.

**\$770,000 in grant awards** were made to housing and social services providers, including \$45,000 in additional grant funds to caregiver agencies that required assistance to continue serving Rockville residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**\$1.1 million** in federal CARES Act and FEMA reimbursements were secured by the Finance Department for pandemic-related expenditures.

... Using Technology to Keep City Government Going and Safely Provide City Services

**9,430 virtual meetings** were held across **531,230 minutes** using the Cisco Webex platform. With support from the Department of Information Technology, city staff conducted regular Mayor and Council and board and

commission meetings, group interview sessions, internal team meetings, virtual classes, and large-scale public events using the platform.



The Department of Public Works held virtual kickoff and construction meetings and site inspections. The stream restoration spot repair at **Bullards Park** began at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. Construction was completed on time and as budgeted, even as crews and inspectors worked through mask requirements, social distancing and unknown risk factors associated with COVID-19.

DPW launched a digital solution for submitting permit applications and plans. The city is now accepting online credit card and automated clearing house payments for development and permitting fees, providing a faster and contactless approach to processing payments. The Department of Planning and Development Services established a streamlined process to approve temporary outdoor seating areas.

The Department of Information Technology created a system that the Department of Human Resources used to record employee COVID-19 tests and capture insights with an easy-to-use Power BI dashboard, and a tracker solution for documenting the life cycle of COVID-19 cases.

RCPD hosted a variety of programs virtually, including the Senior Community Police Academy,

and regularly attended neighborhood association meetings online. The department also safely conducted **drive-thru National Drug Take Back Day** events, holiday food donation drives and toy donation drop-offs.

The Procurement Division secured an agreement for a permanent **eSourcing solution**, a web-based platform that allows the division to solicit and receive online bids and proposals online.

The Office of the City Clerk/Director of Council Operations remained fully operational, maintaining an office presence and adapting a hybrid work model that included in-person support and minimal remote support to continue to meet the needs of Rockville constituents and the Mayor and Council.

... Supporting a Police Department That Protects and Serves Its Community

The Rockville City Police Department received overwhelming support from community businesses, restaurants and residents during the COVID-19 crisis with donations of food, personal protective equipment, vehicle decontamination services and many cards and letters of thanks.



RCPD maintained full operations of police services and responded to calls for service without interruption during the pandemic, establishing internal and external protocol for, and taking proper precautions to maintain, the health and wellness of all essential personnel. RCPD is the only local police department to test their staff for COVID-19 on a regular basis.

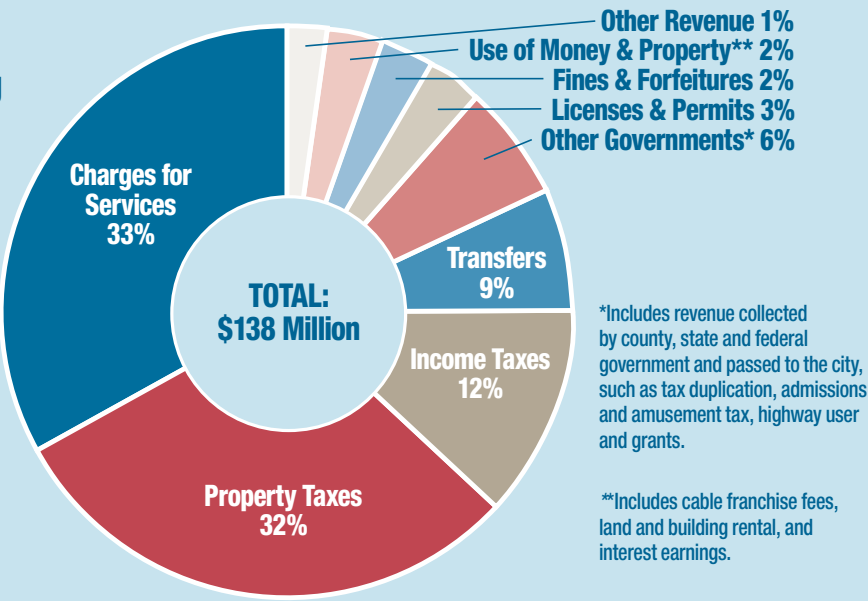
Rockville is ... Fiscally Responsible

FY 2021 Operating Revenues by Category

**\$2.1 million** was saved for the city after the Finance Department conducted Rockville's first-ever virtual bond sale of **\$19.2 million** in 2020B tax-exempt new money bonds and **\$23.9 million** in 2020C taxable refunding bonds.



**AAA/Aaa bond rating** was maintained by the city, the highest possible rating, signaling Rockville's fiscal health and saving Rockville taxpayers money by allowing the city to borrow at the lowest possible interest rates.



FY 2021 Expenditures by Department

